

the condition of education 2007



INDICATOR 30

Student/Teacher Ratios in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

The indicator and corresponding tables are taken directly from *The Condition of Education 2007*. Therefore, the page numbers may not be sequential.

Additional information about the survey data and supplementary notes can be found in the full report. For a copy of *The Condition of Education 2007*, visit the NCES website (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2007064>) or contact ED PUBs at 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

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Learning Opportunities

Student/Teacher Ratios in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

Student/teacher ratios tend to be higher in public schools with larger enrollments than in public schools with smaller enrollments.

The ratio of students to teachers, which is sometimes used as a proxy measure for class size, declined between 1990 and 2004 from 17.6 to 16.3 students per teacher for all regular¹ public elementary, secondary, and combined schools (see supplemental table 30-1). The patterns are different, however, when public elementary, secondary, and combined schools are examined separately.

The student/teacher ratio for regular public elementary schools declined from 1990 through 2004 (from 18.2 to 16.0), with most of the decline occurring after 1996. Generally, elementary schools in each enrollment category showed similar patterns except in the largest schools (1,500 students or greater), where the student/teacher ratio increased from 19.9 to 20.5 students per teacher.

In contrast, student/teacher ratios for all regular public secondary schools increased between 1990 and 1996 (from 16.7 to 17.6) and then

declined to 16.9 in 2004. Secondary schools in each enrollment category showed similar patterns.

In regular public combined schools (that include both elementary and secondary grades), student/teacher ratios were lower in 2004 (15.2) than in 1990 (15.8). This change was consistent in all but the largest schools, where the ratio rose to 19.4 in 2004.

In every year from 1990 through 2004, the student/teacher ratio was positively associated with the enrollment for elementary, secondary, and combined regular public schools: the student/teacher ratio for any given enrollment category was always larger than that of any smaller enrollment category. For example, in 2004, regular elementary schools with over 1,500 students enrolled 6.8 more students per teacher, on average, than regular elementary schools with enrollments under 300.

¹ Regular schools include all schools except special education schools, vocational schools, and alternative schools.

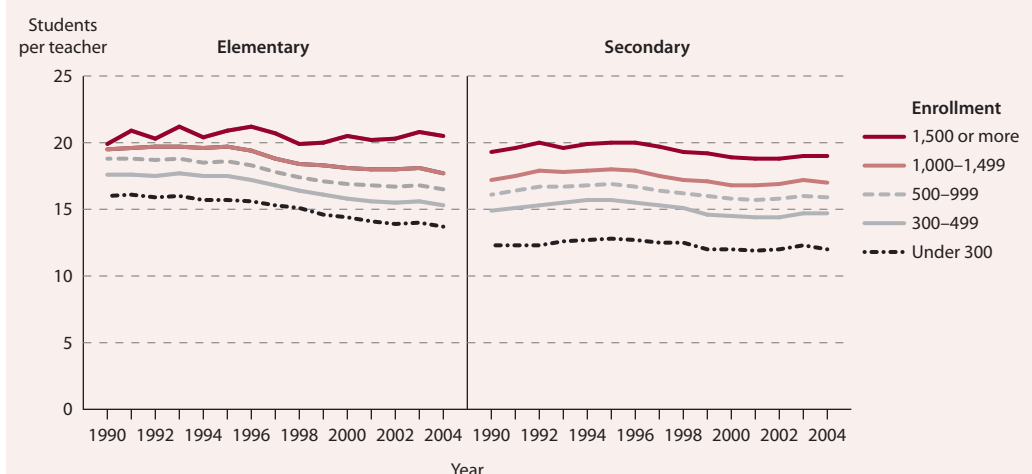
NOTE: Student/teacher ratios do not provide a direct measure of class size. The ratio is determined by dividing the total number of full-time-equivalent teachers into the total student enrollment. These teachers include classroom teachers; prekindergarten teachers in some elementary schools; art, music, and physical education teachers; and teachers who do not teach regular classes every period of the day. This analysis excludes schools that did not report both enrollment and teacher data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 1990–91 through 2004–05.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Supplemental Note 3
Supplemental Table 30-1

STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: Student/teacher ratios in regular public elementary and secondary schools, by school enrollment: Fall 1990–2004



Student/Teacher Ratios in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

Table 30-1. Student/teacher ratios in public schools, by type, level, and enrollment of school: Selected years, Fall 1990–2004

Type, level, and enrollment of school	Year							
	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004
All schools	17.4	17.7	17.7	17.6	16.9	16.4	16.2	16.2
Regular schools	17.6	17.8	17.8	17.7	17.0	16.5	16.3	16.3
Elementary schools	18.2	18.1	18.0	17.9	17.0	16.5	16.2	16.0
Under 300	16.0	15.9	15.7	15.6	15.1	14.4	13.9	13.7
300–499	17.6	17.5	17.5	17.2	16.4	15.8	15.5	15.3
500–999	18.8	18.7	18.5	18.3	17.4	16.9	16.7	16.5
1,000–1,499	19.5	19.7	19.6	19.4	18.4	18.1	18.0	17.7
1,500 or more	19.9	20.3	20.4	21.2	19.9	20.5	20.3	20.5
Secondary schools	16.7	17.4	17.6	17.6	17.1	16.7	16.8	16.9
Under 300	12.3	12.3	12.7	12.7	12.5	12.0	12.0	12.0
300–499	14.9	15.3	15.7	15.5	15.1	14.5	14.4	14.7
500–999	16.1	16.7	16.8	16.7	16.2	15.8	15.8	15.9
1,000–1,499	17.2	17.9	17.9	17.9	17.2	16.8	16.9	17.0
1,500 or more	19.3	20.0	19.9	20.0	19.3	18.9	18.8	19.0
Combined schools	15.8	15.8	16.1	15.7	14.6	14.9	15.2	15.2
Under 300	11.0	10.9	11.3	10.0	10.4	10.4	10.8	10.3
300–499	14.8	14.5	14.4	14.6	14.1	13.9	14.1	14.2
500–999	16.7	15.8	16.5	16.6	15.6	15.9	16.2	15.9
1,000–1,499	17.8	18.5	18.1	17.9	17.2	17.6	18.1	17.6
1,500 or more	19.0	19.8	20.0	19.6	18.9	20.0	20.7	19.4
Alternative	14.2	16.5	18.0	16.6	16.4	15.2	14.9	14.4
Special education	6.5	7.0	6.9	7.4	7.3	7.0	7.0	7.4
Vocational	13.0	13.0	12.9	12.9	13.1	12.7	9.9	11.5

NOTE: The student/teacher ratio is determined by dividing the total number of full-time-equivalent teachers into the total enrollment. Regular schools include all schools except special education schools, vocational schools, and alternative schools. Combined schools include both elementary and secondary grades. This analysis excludes schools that did not report both enrollment and teacher data. See *supplemental note 3* for more information about the Common Core of Data (CCD).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 1990–91 through 2004–05.